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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HILLAH 000018

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: WASIT POLITICAL OUTSIDERS PREPARE FOR PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

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CLASSIFIED BY: GARY ANDERSON, ACTING REGIONAL COORDINATOR, REO,
AL-HILLAH, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Wasit Provincial Council and local officials outside of the ruling Shi'a Islamist groupings (principally the major constituent parties of the United Iraqi Alliance) have begun preparations for provincial elections to be held on an undetermined date in 2006. A slate of secular PC and sub-district council officials is in the works and is actively seeking USG support in the provincial elections. A strong performance by Sadrist candidates is likely, though the extent to which they will align themselves with the dominant Shi'a Islamist Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and Badr Organization is unknown. Elected officials from across the province have also expressed their fears that the provincial budget, recently supplemented by a large infusion of funds from Baghdad, will be used by PC members to secure personal and political favors. END SUMMARY.

PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OUTSIDERS ASK FOR U.S. AID

12. (C) Wasit Provincial Council members Hadi Al-Yaseri and Dakhel Shawi informed Regional Embassy Office Al-Hillah staff during the week of February 8 that they intend to form an independent slate to compete in provincial elections to be held after the formation of a new federal government in Baghdad. Al-Yaseri, an independent member of the Provincial Council, stated he decided to set out on his own after declining an offer by SCIRI and Badr officials to run on a Shi'a Islamist slate. The current PC, in the opinion of Al-Yaseri, is too firmly in the hands of religious parties. Further, he fully expects SCIRI and Badr affiliated slates to exploit their connections to Shi'a religious authorities in Wasit province and the Marja'iyah in Najaf. Al-Yaseri also pointedly asked why the United States was not actively and publicly supporting secular parties and candidates, when it was clear that religious parties were drawing support from states "outside Iraq".

STRONG SADRIST PERFORMANCE EXPECTED

13. (C) Like other provincial officials, Al-Yaseri said he expected that Sadrist candidates would win a large percentage, perhaps as high as 30 percent, of provincial council seats. Also, he predicted that Dawa-Iraq officials in Wasit would break from SCIRI/Badr and align themselves with the Sadrists. Wasit Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) chairman Haider Allawi, also told REO staff that the Sadrist presence was

becoming more visible and organized in the province, and that a strong electoral showing is likely.

RECONSTRUCTION BUDGET AS CAMPAIGN TOOL

14. (C) Wasit elected officials outside the top tier of Shi'a Islamist members of the Provincial Council have expressed to REO staff their concern that Wasit's share of money from the National Reconstruction Council in Baghdad (approximately USD 90 million, according to the Governor) will be misused by PC officials. Al-Yaseri and Shawi both said that though they were aware Wasit would receive the money; neither of them had been involved in Provincial Council discussions on how the money will be spent. Al-Debony sub-district council chairman Faris Hassan Yousef, in his first meeting with REO staff, complained that government units below the Provincial Council level have been shut out of the budget entirely. NOTE: The Governor and PC members, though recently very cooperative during Provincial Reconstruction and Development Committee meetings to discuss the use of USG reconstruction funds, have been close-lipped and unwilling to discuss how the PC plans to allocate money from Baghdad. END NOTE.

15. (C) COMMENT. Though a firm date for provincial elections has not been set, the broad contours of the contest are already apparent. Reconstruction progress and federalism will be among the major issues in the South Central region of Iraq. SCIRI/Badr will almost certainly remain the dominant Shi'a Islamist force in the province and are using the last months of the current provincial government to strengthen their hand. A key unanswered question is to what extent the current truce between the Sadrists and Badr Organization will hold as elections approach. Secular parties and slates, particularly those headed by marginalized PC members such as Al-Yaseri, are unlikely to have a major impact on the power structure of the province. END COMMENT.

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16. (SBU) BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

HADI AL-YASERI: AKA Sayyed Hadi Ne'emah Ali Al Yaseri. A schoolteacher, Hadi is a member of the Al-Yaseri tribe, a large tribe in Diyala and Wasit provinces in Eastern Iraq. He was elected to the Provincial Council on the "Wasit Iraqi Elites Gathering", a slate that combined SCIRI/Badr affiliated candidates with more moderate Shi'a Islamists. Once on the Provincial Council, however, Al-Yaseri established himself as an independent.

DAKHIL SHAWI: Secular, independent Provincial Council member, not affiliated with any slate. Resident of Al-Moufaqiyah, where he was a member of the district council before his election to the PC. An engineer by training, Shawi is a member of the Al-Rufaiy tribe, a large Saudi-based tribe with a small presence in Wasit. Shawi speaks English well.

FARIS HASSAN YOUSEF: Secular, Al-Dubony district council member. Trained as an agricultural engineer and head of the local Al-Dubony agricultural and cultivators' association. In addition to his support in the agricultural community, Yousef receives support as a prominent member of the Garqul'li tribe. END BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION.
ANDERSON